

Banded Dotterel breeding at Stewart Island

Oliver (1955, *New Zealand Birds* p.260) says of the Banded Dotterel (*Charadrius bicinctus*): "Stewart Island, not known to breed". Likewise, the other usual references do not include Stewart Island in its breeding distribution. In personal observations and inquiries over many years, I have failed to produce evidence of its breeding there. In 1983, Ida Collett of Halfmoon Bay, after extensive inquiries of local residents, including well-known long-time naturalist Roy Trill, wrote to me that "there is no written record that it does breed here".

Thus the following observation from the diary of Rhys Buckingham (pers. comm.) is of considerable interest:

"26.11.1980 (1515 h) walking along West Ruggedy beach southwards from a cave, past the bluff (a high-tide impasse) to the first big creek near the south end. One Banded Dotterel chick with three adults nearby; the adults moved up to the chick as if attempting to protect it. I had a good look at the chick in my hands — it would have been just a day or two old. There was no sign of nests or other chicks."

Although the Banded Dotterel is regularly reported on Stewart Island, which has large areas of potential breeding habitat, this seems to be the first positive evidence of its breeding there.

PETER CHILD, *10 Royal Tce, Alexandra*

* ————— *

Fairy Terns at Taporā, Kaipara Harbour

On 22 June 1985, while counting waders near Taporā, Kaipara Harbour, we noticed a group of 10 small terns. They were roosting next to, but not mixed with, a group of waders consisting mainly of Bar-tailed Godwit (*Limosa lapponica*) and Pied Stilt (*Himantopus h. leucocephalus*). While we examined these terns, a White-fronted Tern (*Sterna striata*) landed among them, emphasising their small size.

On consulting *The new guide to the birds of New Zealand* (Falla *et al.* 1979), we determined that the small terns were Fairy Terns (*S. nereis*). Seven were adults with orange legs, yellow bill and black eye patch not reaching the base of the bill, features which distinguished them from the Little Tern (*S. albigrons*). Three were immature with dull grey-brown legs and mottled crowns, the black cap being incomplete. We watched the birds for about 30 minutes, during which time two New Zealand Dotterels (*Charadrius obscurus*) moved freely among them.

According to Falla *et al.* (1979), the Fairy Tern is "Now known as a breeding bird in New Zealand only from Northland, where probably fewer than ten pairs attempt to nest". The Classified Summarised Notes in *Notornis* suggest that numbers have not increased greatly since 1979, and they contain few breeding records of *S. nereis*. A winter flock of 13 Fairy Terns with 12 Little Terns was reported 7 years ago at the site of our present observation (R. B. Goffin, 1978, *Notornis* 25: 331).